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April 24, 2023

DELIVERED ELECTRONICALLY

House Committee on Revenue  
Oregon State Legislature  
900 Court St. NE, Salem, OR 97301

## Re: **Support HB 3014 to provide flexibility in use of existing school district transportation funds**

Dear Chair Nathanson, Vice-Chairs Reschke and Walters, and members of the Committee,

Better Eugene-Springfield Transportation (BEST) is a 501(c)(3) educational nonprofit that is building a successful community by bringing people together to promote transportation options, safe streets, and walkable neighborhoods.

BEST supports House Bill 3014 to give schools districts flexibility to use *existing* transportation funding as makes the most sense. As we understand the measure, it should have minimal fiscal impact.

Nonetheless, as you have seen, the Legislative Fiscal Office concludes that “costs related to the measure are indeterminate at this time.” Perhaps this Committee can work to clarify what the measure will or won’t do?

In the past, I have taught math at Oak Hill School and at Lane Community College. I have also been on faculty at the University of Oregon in the School of Planning, and currently am working with three University of Oregon student interns on a transportation safety project in Springfield. What I have learned as a long-time educator is that what students learn outside the classroom can be as important as what they learn inside.

*How* students get to school is an important part of their education.

Today’s youth face an uncertain future. They are concerned about having the same opportunities their parents and grandparents have had.<sup>1</sup> More and more members of Gen Z are declining to get a driver’s license, something that had been a rite of passage for previous generations.<sup>2</sup> We are seeing more obesity and related health problems as youth have fewer opportunities to be active.<sup>3</sup> And each summer wildfires linked to climate change result in unhealthy air for extended periods of time.<sup>4</sup>

BEST suggests a “hierarchy of ways to get to school”:

1. **Walk, bike, roll:** The best way for students to get to school—when safe and practical—is to walk, bike, or roll. Such physical activity promotes

Building a successful community by bringing people together  
to promote transportation options, safe streets, and walkable neighborhoods.

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BEST is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit. Contributions are tax-deductible to the extent the law allows. Tax ID #42-1661720.

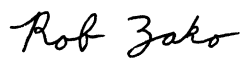
health and teaches independence and responsibility. It also reduces parking costs for school districts, traffic congestion for surrounding communities, and air pollution.

2. **Ride the bus:** The second-best way is for students to ride the bus with other students, whether on a a) school or b) public bus. Lane Transit District is using State Transportation Improvement Fund (STIF) monies to provide all K-12 students with free transit passes.<sup>5</sup> But since the pandemic, we are seeing a shortage of bus drivers, making it difficult for school districts to provide school buses even when they have funding to do so.
3. **Drive or be driven:** As a last resort, some students are driven by their parents or drive themselves to school. Especially when students attend schools farther from where they live, driving might be the only practical option, but one that imposes parking costs on school districts and other impacts such as traffic congestion on the surrounding community.

But current rules allow school districts to use transportation funds for only option 2a: school buses.

To benefit student and communities, BEST supports House Bill 3014 to give schools districts flexibility to use transportation funding as makes the most sense.

For BEST,



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<sup>1</sup> “Millennial life: How young adulthood today compares with prior generations,” Pew Research Center, 2/14/19, <https://www.pewresearch.org/social-trends/2019/02/14/millennial-life-how-young-adulthood-today-compares-with-prior-generations-2/>.

<sup>2</sup> “ ‘I’ll call an Uber or 911’: Why Gen Z doesn’t want to drive,” *New York Times*, 2/13/23, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/climate-solutions/2023/02/13/gen-z-driving-less-uber/>.

<sup>3</sup> “Childhood Obesity Facts,” Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 5/17/22, <https://www.cdc.gov/obesity/data/childhood.html>.

<sup>4</sup> “Oregon faces sustained and novel risks and opportunities as climate changes, new assessment shows,” Oregon State University, 1/4/23, <https://today.oregonstate.edu/news/oregon-faces-sustained-and-novel-risks-and-opportunities-climate-changes-new-assessment-shows>.

<sup>5</sup> “K-12 Students Ride Free!” Lane Transit District, <https://www.ltd.org/student-pass/>.